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April 26, 2012

Elisabeth Lardner, Chair

Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority

3700 Pender Drive

Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Dear Ms. Lardner:

Please accept the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board's (CSB's) full endorsement of the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority's (FCRHA's) Moving to Work proposal: Total Housing Reinvention Initiative for Individual Success, Vital Services and Economic Empowerment (THRIVE). This innovative redesign of the FCRHA's federal and local rental housing programs has the potential to open new doors in the housing continuum for individuals the CSB serves.

The current environment in which local affordable housing and human services systems operate is challenging: resources are declining significantly, the affordable housing stock is aging, affordable housing needs are growing dramatically and households with the lowest incomes spend years on waitlists for subsidized housing. We must utilize the resources we have to ensure citizens who can move toward economic self-sufficiency and market rate housing have the incentives to do so, and citizens who functionally cannot earn sufficient income to obtain housing receive the assistance they need to maintain their housing, economic, and physical/mental health stability and achieve their highest potential.

The Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board believes THRIVE demonstrates flexible, creative, and cost-effective ways to assist families to become self-sufficient and increase housing choice and availability, including options for individuals with disabilities who may rely on long-term housing assistance. The proposal weaves together several key elements: (1) development of a housing continuum using FCRHA federal and local rental housing programs; (2) setting goals for success in the type of housing on the continuum appropriate to the individual's needs; (3) access to supportive services and education/training around key economic skills; and (4) provision of opportunities and financial incentives to move through the continuum. The combination of these elements will benefit individuals with mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and substance use disorders who need a range of housing opportunities and levels of support to obtain and maintain housing.

As of June 2011, approximately 1,650 individuals the CSB serves needed affordable housing. Of these, five percent (86) need affordable housing only, with time-limited or no additional support services to obtain and maintain their housing. These individuals are likely to be able to progress fairly far along the housing continuum with the right opportunities, education/training and incentives. Another 50% need a variety of supportive services in

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their home an average of several visits per week to obtain and maintain their housing. Many of these individuals will move to Step 2 of the housing continuum: Public Housing or a Housing Choice Voucher. The remaining 45% need supervised to intensive levels of support which typically involve overnight care. These individuals may require alternatives ranging from congregate living options through Step 2 of the housing continuum, depending upon the type, level and frequency of assistance they require.

In addition to reinventing the housing system, FCRHA's Moving to Work application proposes to streamline regulatory requirements that will ultimately benefit individuals the CSB serves. Some examples include reducing the frequency of tenant re-certifications and HQS inspections for units with positive inspection histories, allowing self-certification for some income eligibility verifications, and excluding asset income from income calculations for households with assets below \$50,000. These changes will definitely speed up eligibility determination and recertification processes for individuals with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Income.

The CSB also applauds increasing housing choice by making the Bridging Affordability program the "gateway" to next steps in the housing continuum. This approach works for individuals the CSB serves because (1) it allows time to assess what the most appropriate housing resource will be based on the individual's needs and (2) it provides the individual "bridging" assistance until the most appropriate housing resource becomes available. Likewise, we support the plan to project-base scattered site public housing units, which could open housing options for individuals with disabilities who have languished for years on CSB residential waitlists.

The Fairfax-Falls Church CSB has a solid history of working in partnership with FCRHA to develop residential housing options with supportive services for individuals with mental illness, intellectual disabilities and substance use disorders. Our agency is also transforming the way in which we deliver behavioral health and community services by reorganizing and realigning resources to better assist those who need us most. Our goal is to deliver the **right** services, at the **right** time, in the **right** place to people as defined by **their** individual needs. Services are organized by type and intensity rather than by disability. This new service structure builds on strengths of our CSB staff and community partners, including FCRHA, and enhances our capacity to ensure services and supports are connected and cohesive. FCRHA's flexible approach to building individual success along the affordable rental housing continuum absolutely complements the CSB's new service delivery paradigm. We look forward to collaborating with you on the implementation of this promising initiative.

Sincerely,

Whatha Slava Martha Lloyd

Chair